

Hmongic languages

The **Hmongic** also known as **Miao languages** include the various languages spoken by the Miao people (such as Hmong, Hmu, and Xong), Pa-Hng, and the "Bunu" languages used by non-Mien-speaking Yao people.

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Name

The most common name used for the languages is *Miao* (苗), the Chinese name and the one used by Miao in China. However, *Hmong* is more familiar in the West, due to Hmong emigration. Many overseas Hmong prefer the name *Hmong*, and claim that *Miao* is both inaccurate and pejorative, though it is generally considered neutral by the Miao community in China.

Of the Hmongic languages spoken by ethnic Miao, there are a number of overlapping names. The three branches are as follows,^[2] as named by Purnell (in English and Chinese), Ma, and Ratliff, as well as the descriptive names based on the patterns and colors of traditional dress:

Hmongic	
Miao	
Ethnicity	Miao people
Geographic distribution	China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand
Linguistic classification	Hmong–Mien <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hmongic
Subdivisions	Bahengic <ul style="list-style-type: none">SheicWest Hmongic (Chuanqiandian Miao)Xong (Western Hunan)Hmu (Eastern Guizhou)possibly other, unclassified branches
ISO 639-2 / 5	hmn
Glottolog	hmon1337 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/hmon1337) ^[1]



Glottolog	Native name	Purnell	Chinese name	Ma	Ratliff	Dress-color name
west2803 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/west2803)	Ahmao*	Sichuan–Guizhou–Yunnan Miao	川黔滇苗 <i>Chuanqiandian Miao</i>	Western Miao	West Hmongic	White, Blue/Green, Flowery, etc.
nort2748 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nort2748)	Xong	Western Hunan Miao	湘西苗 <i>Xiangxi Miao</i>	Eastern Miao	North Hmongic	Red Miao/Meo
east2369 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/east2369)	Hmu	Eastern Guizhou Miao	黔东南苗 <i>Qiandong Miao</i>	Central Miao	East Hmongic	Black Miao

* Ahmao is local Chinese for Flower Miao. No common name. Miao speakers use forms like *Hmong* (*Mong*), *Hmang* (*Mang*), *Hmao*, *Hmyo*. Yao speakers use names based on *Nu*.

The *Hunan Province Gazetteer* (1997) gives the following autonyms for various peoples classified by the Chinese government as Miao.

- Xiangxi Prefecture: gho Xong (guo Xiong 果雄), ghe Xong (ge Xiong 仡熊); guo Chu 果楚 (ceremonial)
- Luxi County and Guzhang County: ghao So (Suo 缩), te Suang (Shuang 爽)
- Jingzhou County: Hmu (Mu 目), (Nai Mu 乃目)
- Chengbu County: Hmao (Mao 髡)

Writing

The Hmongic languages have been written with at least a dozen different scripts,^[3] none of which has been universally accepted among Hmong people as standard. Tradition has it that the ancestors of the Hmong, the Nanman, had a written language with a few pieces of significant literature. When the Han-era Chinese began to expand southward into the land of the Hmong, whom they considered barbarians, the script of the Hmong was lost, according to many stories. Allegedly, the script was preserved in the clothing. Attempts at revival were made by the creation of a script in the Qing Dynasty, but this was also brutally suppressed and no remnant literature has been found. Adaptations of Chinese characters have been found in Hunan, recently.^[4] However, this evidence and mythological understanding is disputed. For example, according to Professor S. Robert Ramsey, there was no writing system among the Miao until the missionaries created them.^[5] It is currently unknown for certain whether or not the Hmong had a script historically.

Around 1905, Samuel Pollard introduced the Pollard script, for the A-Hmao language, an abugida inspired by Canadian Aboriginal Syllabics, by his own admission.^[6] Several other syllabic alphabets were designed as well, the most notable being Shong Lue Yang's Pahawh Hmong script, which originated in Laos for the purpose of writing Hmong Daw, Hmong Njua, and other dialects of the standard Hmong language.

In the 1950s, pinyin-based Latin alphabets were devised by the Chinese government for three varieties of Miao: Xong, Hmu, and Chuangqiandian (Hmong), as well as a Latin alphabet for A-Hmao to replace the Pollard script (now known as "Old Miao"), though Pollard remains popular. This meant that each of the branches of Miao in the classification of the time had a separate written standard.^[7] Wu and Yang (2010) believe that standards should be developed for each of the six other primary varieties of Chuangqiandian as

well, although the position of Romanization in the scope of Hmong language preservation remains a debate. Romanization remains common in China and the United States, while versions of the Lao and Thai scripts remain common in Thailand and Laos.

Nyiakeng Puachue Hmong script was created by Reverend Chervang Kong Vang to be able to capture Hmong vocabulary clearly and also to remedy redundancies in the language as well as address semantic confusions that was lacking in other scripts. This was created in the 1980s and was mainly used by United Christians Liberty Evangelical Church, a church also founded by Vang. The script bears strong resemblance to the Lao alphabet in structure and form and characters inspired from the Hebrew alphabets, although the characters themselves are different.^[8]

Classification

Hmongic is one of the primary branches of the Hmong–Mien language family, with the other being Mienic. Hmongic is a diverse group of perhaps twenty languages, based on mutual intelligibility, but several of these are dialectically quite diverse in phonology and vocabulary, and are not considered to be single languages by their speakers. There are probably over thirty languages taking this into account.^[9] Four classifications are outlined below, though the details of the West Hmongic branch are left for that article.

Mo Piu, first documented in 2009, was reported by Geneviève Caelen-Haumont (2011) to be a divergent Hmongic language, and was later determined to be a dialect of Guiyang Miao. Similarly, Ná-Meo is not addressed in the classifications below, but is believed by Nguyen (2007) to be closest to Hmu (Qiandong Miao).

Strecker (1987)

Strecker's classification is as follows:^[9]

■ Hmongic (Miao)

- West Hunan = Xong = Xiangxi (Northern Hmongic)
- East Guizhou = Mhu = Qiandong (Eastern Hmongic)
- Pa Hng
- Hm Nai = Wunai
- Kiong Nai = Jiongnai
- Yu Nuo = Younuo
- Sichuan–Guizhou–Yunnan = Chuanqiangdian (Western Hmongic, including Bu-Nao) (See)

In a follow-up to that paper in the same publication, he tentatively removed Pa-Hng, Wunai, Jiongnai, and Yunuo, positing that they may be independent branches of Miao–Yao, with the possibility that Yao was the first of these to branch off, effectively meaning that Miao/Hmongic would consist of six branches: She (Ho-Nte), Pa-Hng, Wunai, Jiongnai, Yunuo, and everything else.^[10] In addition, the 'everything else' would include nine distinct but unclassified branches, which were not addressed by either Matisoff or Ratliff (see West Hmongic#Strecker).

Matisoff (2001)

Matisoff followed the basic outline of Strecker 1987, apart from consolidating the Bunu languages and leaving She unclassified:

■ Hmongic (Miao)

- Bunu
 - Younuo
 - Wunai
 - Bu-Nao: Pu No, Nao Klao, Nu Mhou, Nunu, Tung Nu
 - Jiongnai
- Chuanqiangdian Miao (See)
- Pa-Hng
- Qiandong Miao (Hmu, 3 languages)
- Xiangxi Miao (Xong, 2 languages)

Wang & Deng (2003)

Wang & Deng (2003) is one of the few Chinese sources which integrate the Bunu languages into Hmongic on purely linguistic grounds. They find the following pattern in the statistics of core Swadesh vocabulary:^[11]

- She
- (main branch)
 - (Hunan–Guangxi)
 - Jiongnai
 - (other)
 - Western Hunan (Northern Hmongic / Xong)
 - Younuo–Pa-Hng
 - (Guizhou–Yunnan)
 - Eastern Guizhou (Eastern Hmongic / Hmu)
 - (Western)
 - Bu-Nao
 - Western Hmongic
 - A-Hmao
 - Hmong

Matisoff (2006)

Matisoff 2006 outlined the following. Not all varieties are listed.^[12]

- Northern Hmong = West Hunan (Xong)
- Western Hmong (See)
- Central Hmong
 - Longli Miao
 - Guizhu
- Eastern Guizhou (Hmu)

- Daigong
- Kaili (= Northern)
- Lushan
- Taijiang (= Northern)
- Zhenfeng (= Northern)
- Phö
- Rongjiang (= Southern)
- Patengic
 - Pateng
 - Yongcong

Matisoff also indicates Hmongic influence on Gelao in his outline.

Ratliff (2010)

The Hmongic classification below is from Martha Ratliff (2010:3).^[13]

- **Hmongic (Miao)**
 - Pa-Hng – 32,000 speakers
 - Main branch
 - Kiong Nai – 1,100 speakers
 - She – 910 speakers
 - Core Hmongic
 - West Hmongic (Chuanqiandian)
 - Hmong – 3,712,000 speakers
 - Gha-Mu - 84,000 speakers
 - A-Hmao – 300,000 speakers in Guizhou and Yunnan
 - Bu-Nao – 390,000 speakers in Guangxi
 - Gejia - 60,000 speakers
 - A-Hmyo - 61,000 speakers
 - Mashan - 140,000 speakers
 - Guiyang - 190,000 speakers
 - Huishui - 180,000 speakers
 - Pingtang - 24,000 speakers
 - Xong – 900,000 speakers mostly in Hunan
 - Hmu – 2,100,000 speakers mostly in Guizhou

Ratliff (2010) notes that Pa-Hng, Jiongnai, and Xong (North Hmongic) are phonologically conservative, as they retain many Proto-Hmongic features that have been lost in most other daughter languages. For instance, both Pa-Hng and Xong have vowel quality distinctions (and also tone distinctions in Xong) depending on whether or not the Proto-Hmong-Mien rime was open or closed. Both also retain the second part of Proto-Hmong-Mien diphthongs, which is lost in most other Hmongic languages, since they tend to preserve only the first part of Proto-Hmong-Mien diphthongs. Ratliff notes that the position of Xong (North Hmongic) is

still quite uncertain. Since Xong preserves many archaic features not found in most other Hmongic languages, any future attempts at classifying the Hmong-Mien languages must also address the position of Xong.

Taguchi (2012)

Yoshihisa Taguchi's (2012, 2013) computational phylogenetic study classifies the Hmongic languages as follows.^{[14][15]}

Hmongic

- Pahngic
 - Pa Hng
- Northern
 - Xong
- Core Hmongic
 - Central
 - Hmu
 - Western
 - Hmong–Hmyo
 - Hmong
 - Hmyo
 - Pu Nu – Nao Klao
 - Pu Nu
 - Nao Klao
 - Eastern
 - Kiong Nai
 - Ho Ne – Pana
 - Ho Ne
 - Pana

Hsiu (2015, 2018)

Hsiu's (2015, 2018)^{[16][17]} computational phylogenetic study classifies the Hmongic languages as follows, based primarily on lexical data from Chen (2013).^[18]

Hmongic

- Pahengic: Pa Hng, Hm Nai
- Xiongic
 - Western (Xiong)
 - Eastern (Suang)

- Sheic
 - She–Jiongnai
 - Younuo
 - Pana
- Hmuic
 - North-East
 - West (Raojia)
 - South
- West Hmongic
 - Bu-Nao
 - Bunu
 - Nunu
 - Numao
 - Hmong (Chuanqiandian)
 - (various)

Mixed languages

Due to intensive language contact, there are several language varieties in China which are thought to be mixed Miao–Chinese languages or Sinicized Miao. These include:

- **Lingling** (Linghua) of northern Guangxi
- The **Maojia dialect** (also called Aoka or Qingyi Miao) of Chengbu Miao Autonomous County, Hunan and Ziyun, Longsheng Various Nationalities Autonomous County, Guangxi, which is located near Pana-speaking villages.
- **Badong Yao** 八峒瑶 of Xinning County, Hunan
- **Laba** 喇叭: more than 200,000 in Qinglong, Shuicheng, Pu'an, and Panxian in Guizhou; possibly a mixed Xiang Chinese and Miao language. The people are also called *Huguangren* 湖广人, because they claim their ancestors had migrated from Huguang (modern-day Hunan and Hubei).^[19]
- **Baishi Miao** 拜师苗 of Baishi District, Tianzhu County, eastern Guizhou, possibly a mixed Chinese and Miao (Hmu) language^[20]
- **Sanqiao**, a mixed Hmu-Kam (Miao-Dong) language of southeastern Guizhou

Numerals

Numerals in Hmongic Languages^[21]

Language	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven	Eight	Nine	Ten
Proto-Hmong-Mien	*ʔɛ̌	*ʔuɪ	*pɔu	*plei	*prja	*kruk	*dzjuŋH	*jat	*N-juə	*gjuəp
Pa-Hng (Gundong)	jiɿ	waɿ	poɿ	tiɿ	tjaɿ	tɕuɿ	tɕaŋɿ	jiɿ	koɿ	kuɿ
Wunai (Longhui)	iɿ	uaɿ	poɿ	tsiɿ	piaɿ	tjuɿ	tɕaɿ	ɕiɿ	koɿ	kʰuɿ
Younuo	jeɿ	uɿ	pjeɿ	pwɔɿ	piɿ	tjoɿ	sɔŋɿ	jaɿ	kiuɿ	kwəɿ
Jiongnai	ʔiɿ	uɿ	paɿ	pleɿ	puiɿ	tɕɔɿ	ʃaŋɿ	zɛɿ	tɕuɿ	tɕɔɿ
She (Chenhu)	iɿ	uɿ	paɿ	piɿ	piɿ	kɔɿ	tsʰuŋɿ	ziɿ	kjʰuɿ	kjʰɔɿ
Western Xong (Layiping)	ɑɿ	ʊɿ	puɿ	pzeiɿ	pzɑɿ	ʈɔɿ	tɕoŋɿ	ziɿ	tɕoɿ	kuɿ
Eastern Xong (Xiaozhang)	aɿ	uɿ	puɿ	ʕeiɿ	pjaɿ	toɿ	zaŋɿ	ziɿ	ɡwɿ	ɡuɿ
Northern Qiandong Miao (Yanghao)	iɿ	oɿ	piɿ	ɿuɿ	tɕaɿ	tɿuɿ	ɕoŋɿ	zaɿ	tɕəɿ	tɕuɿ
Southern Qiandong Miao (Yaogao)	tiŋɿ	vɿ	paiɿ	tɿɔɿ	tɕeiɿ	tjuɿ	tsamɿ	ziɿ	tɕuɿ	tɕuɿ
Pu No (Du'an)	iɿ	aːɿ	peɿ	plaɿ	puɿ	tɕuɿ	saŋɿ	joɿ	tɕuɿ	tɕuɿ
Nao Klao (Nandan)	iɿ	uɔɿ	peiɿ	tljaɿ	ptsiuɿ	tɕauɿ	sɔɿ	jouɿ	tɕauɿ	tɕauɿ
Nu Mhou (Libo)	tɕyɿ	yiɿ	paɿ	tləuɿ	pjaɿ	tjɿ	ɕoŋɿ	jaɿ	tɕɿ	tɕɿ
Nunu (Linyun)	iɿ	əuɿ	peɿ	tɕaɿ	pɿ	tɕuɿ	ɕɔŋɿ	joɿ	tɕuɿ	tɕuɿ
Tung Nu (Qibainong)	iɿ	auɿ	peɿ	tɕaɿ	pjoɿ	ʈuɿ	sɔŋɿ	zoɿ	tɕuɿ	tɕuɿ
Pa Na	ʔaɿ	ʔuɿ	paɿ	tɕoɿ	peiɿ	kjoɿ	ɕoŋɿ	zaɿ	tɕʰuɿ	tɕoɿ
Hmong Shuat (Funing)	ʔiɿ	ʔauɿ	pɕeiɿ	plɔuɿ	pɕɿ	tɕɔuɿ	ɕaŋɿ	ziɿ	tɕaɿ	kɔuɿ
Hmong Dleub (Guangnan)	ʔiɿ	ʔauɿ	peiɿ	plouɿ	tɕɿ	ʈouɿ	ɕǎɿ	ziɿ	tɕuɿ	kouɿ
Hmong Nzhuab (Maguan)	ʔiɿ	ʔauɿ	peiɿ	plouɿ	tɕɿ	ʈouɿ	ɕaŋɿ	ziɿ	tɕuɿ	kouɿ
Northeastern Dian Miao (Shimenkan)	iɿ	aɿ	tsɿ ^[22]	tɿauɿ	pwɿ	tɿauɿ	ɕawɿ	zʰiɿ	dzʰaɿ	ɡʰauɿ
Raojia	iɿ	ɔɿ	poiɿ	ʕɔɿ	pjaɿ	tjuɿ	ɕoŋɿ	zaɿ	tɕaɿ	tɕuɿ
Xijia Miao (Shibanzhai)	iɿ	uɿ	pzɿ ^[22]	pləuɿ	pjaɿ	ʈoɿ	zuŋɿ	jaɿ	jaɿ	ɔɿ
Gejia	iɿ	aɿ	tsɿ	pluɿ	tsiaɿ	tɕuɿ	saŋɿ	zaɿ	tɕaɿ	kuɿ

See also

- List of Proto-Hmong-Mien reconstructions (Wiktionary)
- List of Proto-Hmongic reconstructions (Wiktionary)
- Hmong-Mien comparative vocabulary list (Wiktionary)

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External links

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